

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Luther Faculty Publications

Martin Luther University College

12-2003

Factors that Contributed to the Growth of the Kenya Assemblies of God Church: An Analysis of Multi-paradigms

Florence Juma

Wilfrid Laurier University, fjuma@luther.wlu.ca

J. M. Vorster

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.wlu.ca/theo_faculty



Part of the [History of Religion Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Juma, F. A. and Vorster, J. M. (2003) "Factors That Influenced the Growth of the Assemblies of God Church in Kenya: An Analysis of Multi-paradigms." *Studia Historia Ecclesiasticae* (Journal of the Church History Society of Southern Africa) 29(2), 228-262.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Martin Luther University College at Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Luther Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

Factors that contributed to the growth of the Kenya Assemblies of God church: an analysis of multi-paradigms

F.A. Juma & J.M. Vorster

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education

1. BACKGROUND

Many churches in Africa lack recorded history for various reasons, such as scarcity of funds and/or scholars in the field of church history (cf. Kalu, 1993:166ff). This situation is more prevalent among the Pentecostal movements which, initially and for genuine reasons, were anti-intellectualist and emphasized ministry alone (Clark & Lederle et al, 1983:41; McNamee, 1974:27; and Hollenweger). Another possible explanation results from the fact that these churches are relatively young compared to their counterpart mainline churches. This lack of recorded history poses a hindrance to any efforts in evaluating the growth of such churches.

There is an immediate need to understand the complex nature of the Pentecostal churches and how growth is motivated within their congregations. This is only possible if history is documented. Marwick (1989:14) states that "as memory is to the individual, so history is to the community or society." To fully appreciate history, it is necessary to have it recorded, not just for the present but also for future generations. A church may not be able to adequately evaluate its growth or understand itself without recorded history. This fact applies also to Assemblies of God Church (hereafter KAG) as one of the major Pentecostal movements in Kenya and other parts of the world (Anderson, 1992 & 1993; and Saayman, 1993).

Recorded history is a treasure to any people, society or organisation (Brumback, 1977:iii). If history is not recorded within the life-span of pioneer members, it is likely that when the pioneers have departed, important information that makes the history complete, may die with them. The KAG church has over three decades worth of history and obviously, most of the pioneer members (both missionaries and nationals) are either gone or leaving the stage, one way or the other.

As such, a reflection on its history is timely for the purpose of evaluating both its growth and significance (cf. McIntire, 1984:40).

"A comprehensive general church history of Africa has still to be written," remarks Odendaal (1982), despite the fact that a lengthy bibliography regarding works dealing with the history of the church in Africa, could be compiled. To present the overall picture, Odendaal rightly contends that there definitely exists a disproportionate treatment and distribution of the material. This situation was changed among the younger churches of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of which the KAG church is one.

2. *PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES*

A documented record of the KAG church may be used for the purposes of evaluating the past, understanding reasons for growth in the present and projecting ways in which growth may be stimulated in the future (cf. Marwick, 1989:1ff; McIntire, 1984:25-27; Lewis, 1975:frontflap). It may also help in determining reasons for the much applauded growth of the Pentecostal churches (cf. Anderson, 1992:26; Saayman, 1993; Hodges, 1977:35; Clark & Lederle et al, 1983:4, 12, 18; Hollenweger & Hummel, 1991; Peters, 1981:11).

This article seeks to identify the factors that characterised the general history of Kenia during the period that the KAG church was established, and its significance in relation to the Church. The factors are then categorised as external and internal, and their influence in the growth of the Church is defined. Finally an evaluation of the growth is attempted, using the theory of paradigm analysis with focus on the changes that have occurred and continue to occur within the context of the KAG Church. A discussion follows on how the Church is responding to the changes and the effect that the response may have on future growth.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the growth of the KAG church from a church historical perspective on the basis of the theory of paradigm shift. In order to reach the aim, the following objectives will have to be attained: a review of related literature on church history, African church history (Kung, 1995:62ff and Kalu, 1993:167) and the theory of paradigm shifts; an overview of the general history of the country during the period of focus, to note the external factors/forces at work; a chronological scrutiny of the growth of the

church from its registration to the present time in view of the "new historiography;" an Analysis of both the external and internal factors and a definition of reasons for the growth of the church.

3. *RATIONALE, DATA SOURCE AND METHOD*

The central theoretical argument of this study is that there have been significant changes (paradigm shifts) within the context of the KAG church during the thirty years. Whereas some of these changes have had a positive impact on the growth of the church, the dynamic nature of these changes may pose a challenge to or an opportunity for the church's future growth, depending on the church's response to these significant changes.

As much as this article does not seek to investigate the church's entire historical past, it directs the spotlight onto those factors and forces that influenced the growth of the church, thereby providing the basis for analysis and evaluation. Another rationale for this article originates from a recent observation in the emergence of scholarship on post-modernity and the church in Africa.

This research is approached from a church historical perspective. As such, the literature reviewed will focus on discourses on "new historiography," the theory of paradigm shifts and church growth in church history, in order to relate these to the history of the KAG church. An overview of the general history of the country during the mentioned period is highlighted to identify the factors that are directly or indirectly related to the growth of the KAG church (cf. Githige, 1982:124; Frank, 1983:50). Documents kept by the general office, including annual reports, membership records and financial reports, data derived from interviews, personal testimonies and correspondence among members, constitute the main data source for outlining the history of KAG church and evaluating the growth. London (2002:3) refers to such sources as "artefacts"—generated independently of any research undertaking.

Once all information and materials were obtained, the mode of evaluation adopted in this article is paradigm analysis, advocated by Kung (1995) "as making possible a selection for an overall view of the history of Christianity, it is as comprehensive as possible, yet also precise". However the theory of paradigm shifts is not adopted blindly. The fact that church history is unlike general history shapes

the approach. As Kalu contends (1993:173), "first, church history is more than the history of the institutional structure; second, there ought to be a wider understanding of both types and strategies of evangelisation; and third, the role of the Holy Spirit in the evangelisation process and church dynamics further 'deserve' recognition".

There is consensus among church historians, missiologists and other theologians on the usefulness of the concept of paradigm shifts in explaining sudden and fundamental changes in the way problems are conceptualised and in the methods and strategies used to solve these problems (Vorster, 1994:4; cf. Kung, 1995:62; Bosch, 1991:185; and Lategan, 1988:65). Paradigm analysis is therefore adopted with caution, realizing its limitations in explaining Revelation. An understanding of the concept within its context is considered an appropriate prologue to the discussion.

4. THE THEORY OF PARADIGM SHIFTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

Kuhn first introduced the term to scientific research. He states that paradigm is: "a universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (Kuhn, 1970:viii). In his comprehensive explanation, Kuhn postulates that paradigm is "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community" (Kuhn, 1975). Bosch (1991:185) is careful to point out that the term "paradigm" is not without problems. "It is a slippery concept" he argues, "Kuhn himself has been charged with using the term in at least twenty-two senses in his major work". Kung on the other hand, uses the concept in the sense of "models of interpretation" (1987:163).

T.F. Torrance refers to paradigm as "frames of knowledge" (cf. Martin, 1987:372), while van Huyssteen prefers "frames of reference" and "research traditions" (1986:66). Hiebert (1985b:12) suggests the alternative concept of "belief systems," even for the natural sciences, "since the personal attitude and commitment of the researcher cannot be expunged from his or her research."

In borrowing from Kuhn's definition, a paradigm shift then may be understood as "the replacement of an entire constellation of beliefs,

values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community by a new set of the same". The shift may be a major replacement touching all aspects of life (history) or just minor adjustments of some aspects of life (history). Kung identifies up to three kinds of paradigm shifts including:

- Micro paradigms: paradigm shifts on individual questions,
- Meso paradigms: paradigm shifts in partial areas, and
- Macro paradigms: paradigm shifts in theology, church, society generally (Kung, 1988:134).

When the beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by a particular community cease to adequately solve the problems of that community or become irrelevant to them, then it is a natural tendency to try and seek for alternative ways and means with which to address the problems of the day. The process leads to a paradigm shift, taking place within given periods of time and in diverse ways, not restricted to one particular method or pattern.

This same phenomenon has been observed in church history where shifts from one church period to another were a result of long time changes either in individual perspectives, interpretation of Scriptures, spread of church from one community to another, differing times and new developments. However, unlike science, paradigm changes in church history exhibit features that are unique to Christianity. Kung outlines the six major periods of church history as the main paradigms in Christian history. These periods did not occur suddenly, but involved changes in communities, beliefs, values and needs (Kung, 1995:111; cf. Agbeti, 1986:11). In some cases, the change provided a welcomed alternative (cf. from Jewish apocalyptic to Early Hellenistic) while in others, the proposals to change met strong opposition and even led to separation (cf. the Reformation). In any case, it remains an observable fact that the church of Christ has experienced multiple changes and taken different shapes during the two millennia.

It is further necessary to note that theology and science differ in many ways, including the format in which paradigm shifts take place. Bosch (1991:186) states that "in theology, unlike in the natural science, the new paradigm does not immediately supersede the old one, the two may coexist." For a comprehensive analysis of the six

periods of church, reference is made to Kung's works "Christianity, Its Essence and History" (1995).

The modern and post-modern periods are briefly described below as they form a basis for the discussion that follows. The terms modernity and post-modernity have received exhaustive attention in literature from various perspectives. The descriptions that follow only serve to highlight the periods and landmarks.

- Enlightenment: Modern paradigm; the period covering the 17th and 18th centuries was characterized by scientific and philosophical revolution, cultural revolution of the enlightenment, American and French revolutions and human rights movements. Thomas Finger (1993:21) rightly argues that modernity is a set of assumptions, values and patterns of actions which have guided most of the activity that has become economically, socially, culturally and politically dominant in most of the world since the 18th century. Reason and progress are the driving force of this period and, as it appears, God has been removed from the scene. Schleiermacher, liberal theology and Harnack are among the models of this fifth paradigm. Hunter (1996:22) contends that modernity has not fulfilled most of its promises. As such, the enlightenment worldview has become increasingly vulnerable. Consequently, the church was faced with a complete and different set of challenges, which, while resolving, unfolded into a new paradigm.
- Contemporary: Post-modern paradigm; This is the 20th century period, characterised by first and second World Wars, the poly-centric world and World Council of Churches. All five previous paradigms permeate the contemporary post-modern paradigm in one way or another and sometimes in a reformed state (Kung, 1995:792-3). Vorster (1994) rightly postulates that the catch word which has remained descriptive of the church in this period is "crisis". "Boundaries and distinctions are blurred" argues Finger (1993:24; cf. Veith, 1994:44). "Secularisation seems to be penetrating into the church despite the efforts by many fundamentalists to resist it." Also noticeable in this period, are the efforts for an ecumenical paradigm which seeks

both unity of the church and a return to the basics as much as possible (Kung, 1995:792).

5. *PARADIGM SHIFT: AN INEVITABLE PHENOMENA*

Change is an integral part of life for both individuals, societies and history as a whole. Life is not static. New inventions and innovations continually lead to what may be termed paradigm shifts. Change is a reality that each person, institution or community has to deal with at one time or another. Even though people try very hard to resist change at times, with time, they have to come to terms with its reality.

Klaas (1996:1ff) contrasts between the words "change" and "transition," which is used for the same concept but may be understood differently under different circumstance. For many of us, Klaas Posits, change means "revolution." Transition, on the other hand, tends to imply "evolution." Change usually implies stress, whereas transition sounds more natural. Change sounds abrupt, whereas transition feels smooth. Transition is a helpful, almost soothing term for an unsettling experience. With that contrast, he switches to the word transition when referring to change that has occurred in both the society and churches in North America (cf. Towns, 1991:9ff & George with Bird, 1994).

It is a fact that doctrine and principles never change. These are eternal. However, the application of principles to different cultures does change as culture is not static (cf. Towns, 1990:12). Another contention by Towns (1990:12) postulate that: "Our culture is like a drag racer, rushing toward the future. But will the church be left behind? Too many congregations are hibernating churches, withdrawing from the world, refusing to meet the challenge of society".

George (1994:25) states that the church contemporary is experiencing transformation. He compares this transformation with the transformation that takes place when a caterpillar moves through the change in form to become a butterfly. He then concludes that the church has been crawling, but time has come for soaring. A change is underway and the church is in the time of transition. He also borrows the Greek prefix *Meta* to bring out the meaning of a church in transition, a church that is turning, a church that is becoming.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is safe to conclude that, change has come to be accepted as natural sign of the process of growth. Life can no longer be static and still claim growth that is the essence of its existence. However, change sometimes gets different reactions depending on how prepared individuals may be for it. However, that does not stop the transition process, it happens anyway.

Besides, change is not an experience unique only to general history or secular world, rather it is an experience shared by all individuals, whether in church or in the world. Man is a social, spiritual, rational and physical being and factors affecting one aspect of his being will definitely be felt by his whole person (cf. Adeyemo, 1993:V). Therefore, changes taking place in the social or secular realms of a community affect also the spiritual realm. Van Aarde (1988:52) shares the same thought when he states that "Theology, however, cannot remain in isolation, it's had to cope with the challenges of pluralism and secularisation. As such the need to adopt to all the socio-cultural changes around it."

Anderson's words adequately summarise the phenomenon of change, he postulates that; "change is not the choice, how we handle it is" (1990:11). The church has been faced with the challenges of responding and dealing with the different changes taking place in individuals', communities' and even world perspectives as a whole. In the process of handling the changes in various ways through history, there have been diverse church traditions handed down to the present age. The issue for discussion is not so much the changes that took place, but the different stands and decisions taken by the church, leading to the major paradigms.

Crawford Knox (1993, front-flap), in his book *Changing Christian Paradigms*, analyses the pre-paradigm and post-paradigm periods by tracing the changes in Christianity from the earliest times to show how they have led to the separation of religion and science, faith and reason, supernatural and natural, and so to current materialism, but also to radical alterations in the understanding of God and His relationship to the world.

However, change is not only brought about by time, it can also come about as a result of differences in world and life views, perspectives and philosophies. This was the case when the church spread from

Jewish community to Hellenistic communities. On the same note, Knox observes, among other things, that the Jewish and Greek' understandings of God and the world differ substantially with Western Christianity, influenced by the modern thought. These changes, of which a noticeable turning point is attributed to Augustine (Knox, 1993:63-66), are presented to have taken different shapes from the Jewish Greek times through the major periods of church history and down to the modern times.

He illustrates the point with cases like (in one example) the Jewish view of God as creator and sustainer of the universe. It is not markedly in conflict with Greek ideas, but many Christian scholars underestimate the accessibility of the divine in Jewish thinking of the time of Christ. "Besides", states Knox "Ireneaus' understanding of God and his relationship to the world further exhibits the Jewish and Greek stance which contrasts the patristic stance" (1993:36 & 53). We may, therefore, conclude that change can be experienced not only in different time periods, but also between different communities and peoples living in the same period of time.

Communities' world-views, belief patterns and value systems determine why they behave in certain ways, or adhere to certain beliefs. It is not practical to expect that people will react to, or embrace a given truth in a uniform way. Change, then, declares Anderson, is an "unavoidable aspect of life, without which life would soon become intolerably dull" (Anderson, 1990:10).

However, just as it was established earlier, paradigm shifts in Christianity are not a total replacement of the old beliefs, values or techniques but, may be understood as a new or different interpretation of the teachings or doctrines from their previous interpretations (cf. Kung, 1988:155-161). This situation is attributed to the nature and source of Christian Revelation, on which the Christian message and teachings are based. It is by understanding the nature of Christian Revelation that we can attempt to analyse and evaluate the theory of paradigm shifts as applied to church history.

Kung presents an extensive discussion on this subject under the topics: "The Essence" and "The Center" of Christianity. He concludes the discussion with the fact that the essence of Christianity is Jesus

Christ and the center of Christianity is also Jesus Christ (1995: parts A & B). It follows that Christianity, unlike other religions, is unique.

Another view on change is that change in Christianity, or any other religion for that matter, is negative. Christianity is perceived to be worldly, secular and compromising its standards if it doesn't resist change. This happens to be the case, especially due to the negative view of some Christians regarding science. Science is considered as an enemy of Christianity (or religion). Haas Jnr. (1994:378-392) has written an article entitled: "John Wesley's Views on Science and Christianity: An Examination of the Charge of Antiscience" in which he surveys the position of John Wesley on this subject as understood by scholars. He highlights Wesley's teachings, one of which is on imperfections, when he states that:

"imperfections offered many illustrations to support the Biblical text, "we know in part," both to remind his followers of their limited knowledge of the works of God and to "hide pride from man." Here he sought to provide a prominent place for the Creator and Sustainer of all things, not to prevent human enquiry."

Though we cannot deny the negative effects of modernity and Post-modernity in the church, we do not rule out all changes or influences of modern technology as anti-Christianity. Guinness (1993:3-13) evaluates the influence of modernity in missions, but without denying the negative effects of modernity to Christian mission, he sees the opportunities that modernity affords Christians in missions.

6. *MAPPING THE SHIFT IN THE KENYAN SOCIETY: 1962-2002*

The recently concluded general elections in Kenya (December 27th 2002) provides ample proof that the Kenyan society has continued to shift from the traditional world-view that dominated the period just before and following independence through a modern and towards a post-modern paradigm (Daily Nation on the line, Jan 2003). The traditional cultural, political and in some cases religious beliefs, values, techniques and attitudes formerly shared by the Kenyan society has, with time, continued to become irrelevant. The society has naturally worked towards seeking alternative ways and means in which to address the problems of the day. The shift has been gradual from traditional to modern, but the move towards post-modern has the potential of causing a drastic change.

The Kenyan political system has evolved from multi-party to single party and again back to multi-party system (cf. Juma, 2002:39-49). The one party that maintained leadership from independence to the last general elections was the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU). KANU first ascended to power in a general election held in 1961, when they won a majority of seats in the legislative council. KANU won again at the general election of 1963, and Kenyatta became prime minister in June, when internal self-government began. Kenya became independent on December 12th, of the same year and was declared a republic exactly one year later (cf. Amin, M. & Moll, P. 1978; and Independent Kenya, 1982:27).

Odinga, who was the vice-president, resigned from government in 1966 and formed a new Party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU). Daniel arap Moi, the minister of home affairs, became the vice-president in January 1967 (cf. Kaplan et. Al, 1976:46-47; Throup & Hornsby, 1998). The formation of KPU constituted a significant watershed in independent Kenyan politics. It heralded the return of the two-party state. It presented a direct challenge to both KANU and Kenyatta. I further opened up the possibility of a new kind of inter-party debate in which economics assumed a greater prominence than personality and ethnic loyalty (Gertzel, 1970:144).

Throup & Hornsby have done an analytical study in Multi-Party Politics in Kenya and produced an [sic] historical record of what they call "a key moment in the political life of the country." In their introduction, they give a concise summary of the rise and presence of Multi-party politics in Kenya. The following paragraph is a reproduction of sections from the summary.

Following the detention of ex-Ministers Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia and dissident Raila Odinga on July 1990, the opposition rebuilt and organised a new, more effective coalition to challenge the regime. Its two key leaders during 1991, octogenarian radical Oginga Odinga (father of Raila) and prominent lawyer Paul Muite, took advantage of every opportunity to challenge KANU's legitimacy, dismissing President Moi's claim that multiparty politics would be divisive and exacerbate ethnic rivalries. However, almost as soon as the new opposition movement, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) was registered, certainly once Oginga Odinga had declared his ambition to become the party's Presidential

candidate in early February 1992, the underlying ethnic cleavages of Kenyan political life became starkly evident. Despite the apparent early unity of Kikuyu and Luo leaders, the pre-election period revealed how entrenched the enmity between the two communities had become since independence, so that even mutual self-interest could not hold them together.

Throup & Hornsby says that "the year long campaign, narrates, from the legalisation of the opposition to election day on 29 December 1992, witnessed a series of errors, accidents and miscalculations. The period confirmed the vital importance of the Provincial Administration." As in colonial times, it still provided the essential framework of central control over the rural areas. Provincial and District Commissioners, the government's regional officials, played a prominent role in KANU's campaign. They harassed opposition candidates and supporters, controlled licences for meetings, and even distributed money and food on behalf of the ruling party. They employed the police and security forces to disrupt opposition meetings and to monitor their activities. The opposition found it impossible to function effectively.

Nevertheless, despite the government's control of the electoral process through the Electoral Commission and the use of state-sponsored intimidation and bribery, voters still failed to produce a clear majority for KANU and Moi on polling day. This necessitated the implementation of emergency plans to tilt the balance of the election towards KANU in at least 10 per cent of the parliamentary seats. According to Throup and Hornsby, it remains unclear to what extent, multiparty democracy will endure in Kenya. Western democracy is conceivable and workable only in societies that have a long history of independent material and intellectual foundation (cf. Haugerud, 1995:22ff).

However, history indicates that the people were getting tired of autocratic rule. As Throupe and Hornsby records, on 7 July 1997, the anniversary of the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1990, illegal rallies were held across Kenya in support of constitutional reform. International outrage was expressed at the conduct of the security forces, who, as well as using excessive force to disperse demonstrators, attacked worshippers in the Anglican cathedral in Nairobi and were widely reported to have committed unprovoked

violence against passers-by. The disturbance continued for several days, and a number of people were killed.

In mid-July of 1997, President Moi held meetings with opposition and religious leaders to discuss constitutional reform. He announced that the opposition was free to hold registered public meetings in anticipation of new, more lenient legislation. Following the IMF's decision to suspend loan disbursements to Kenya in August 1997, the government published the Statute Law Miscellaneous Amendments Bill, which proposed the establishment of an anti-corruption authority (Rake, 1998). KANU won the general elections of December 1997 giving, President Moi a fifth and final term in office. This term came to an end in the recently concluded general elections which saw a different Kenya, defiant to President Moi's preferred leader Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta (the late president Kenyatta's son) took over from Moi. The opposition came together and under the able leadership of Raila Odinga, formed a coalition which won with a sweeping majority (cf. Daily Nation on the line, Dec. 28/29, 2002).

This wave of change is not confined within the political arena. It permeates every aspect of life, including the religious sphere. The churches have had their fair share of challenges posed by the changing world-views. The community has gone from traditional religious beliefs, to Christian beliefs and is headed towards a post-Christian era. The decision by two politicians not to hold the Bible during their swearing in into the cabinet, is an example of the emerging world-view (Daily Nation on the line, Jan. 4th 2003). The modern Christian era was introduced on the continent by the great thrust of Protestant missions in the 19th century. This Christian era underwent a series of changes and progress as Theological training and education advanced.

The Assemblies of God missionaries arrived in Kenya at an advanced stage of the Christian era. The national church as a whole was experiencing spiritual awakenings with a noticeable yearning for more. Equipped with the superior methods of teaching and discipleship, flexibility to the leading of the Holy Spirit and willing to conceptualise the gospel without compromising its truth, the advent of the AG missionaries to Kenya, which begun as a coincident, has brought about one of the leading Pentecostal Church movements in the country.

The church's education programs account for a significant amount of growth. The AG mission has gone along way in achieving its goal of establishing a self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting church, amongst other things. At the beginning of this millennium, the figures stood at 1743 churches, 556 trained pastors and 700 in training process (Annual Report, 2000).

7. *GROWTH OF THE CHURCH AND PARADIGM ANALYSIS: AN EVALUATION*

This section considers the dimensions, the kinds and manner of growth as enhanced and/or hindered by both internal and external factors. Subsequently, it investigates how God works through both supernatural and natural ways, using these factors to perfect His will, in other words the growth of the church.

In discussing growth, the question of criteria requires attention. The issue that comes to the fore is how church growth is to be measured and, what standardized criteria, if any, may be used to measure church growth. Qualitative measurement and evaluation of church growth poses a major challenge, because the church is both actual and ideal. The church has both spiritual and natural qualities, because it is an organism and not just an organisation. Hastings rightly postulates that the conception of the ideal church regards it as it really is, i.e. a body of individuals of various degrees of imperfection. The ideal church is a body whose members represent the ideal of membership, i.e. it is a perfect Church, or at least one free from the negative aspect of evil. The two concepts tend to be used interchangeably, depending on the subject and context of a discussion. The church may be referred to as both the visible, tangible personal entity and invisible, intangible, impersonal being. That enables both a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of growth. As such, any attempt to evaluate church growth would require a consideration of both the two concepts for a more complete picture.

Church growth may simply be defined as: progressing or expanding spiritually, numerically and socially, to the point of maturity, developing qualitatively and quantitatively towards Christlikeness. In evaluating the growth of KAG, church growth is approached as God's work. His role is examined, while both internal and external factors that have influenced the growth, are considered. The information

obtained provides a basis for the evaluation of growth and the analysis of paradigm shifts in history.

Newbigin (1978:75), interestingly discusses the gospel and world history. He considers the subject of the universality and particularity of God by introducing the doctrine of election. In the discussion, he states that:

God, according to the biblical picture, although he is the Creator, ruler, sustainer and judge of all peoples, does not accomplish his purpose of blessing for all peoples by means of a revelation simultaneously and equally to all. He chooses one to be the bearer of his blessing for the many. Abraham is chosen to be the pioneer of faith and so to receive the blessing through which all nations will be blessed. Moses is chosen to be the agent of Israel's redemption; Israel is chosen to be a kingdom of priests for the whole earth. The disciples are chosen that they may be "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17) or, in another metaphor, that they may "go and bear fruit" (John 15:16). The church is a body chosen "to declare the wonderful deeds" of God (1 Pet. 2:9).

This is the pattern throughout the Bible. The key to the relation between the universal and the particular is God's way of election. The one (or few) is chosen for the sake of the many; the particular is chosen for the sake of the universal.

Church growth, therefore, is God's work, carried out in and through His elect people throughout history and for the salvation of all. "There exists a risk in speaking about the doctrine of election", cautions Newbigin, "the misunderstandings that this gospel has generated through history are well documented. This doctrine is understood in light of the fact of the nature of human beings. Human beings are to share a life of mutual responsibility for the created world and therefore to see God's saving purpose in terms of this real world of real people" (cf. Newbigin, 1978:77).

Drane (2000:138ff) considers the whole Revelation as a developing story. In discussing the resurgence of meta-narratives in post-modernity, he recommends the use of story telling in preaching the Bible message in the present age. This approach he deems possible in light of the fact that the Bible itself consists of stories. He clearly drives his message home when he states that: "The Bible itself is almost unique in the world of religious literature because it consists, not of abstract philosophical and religious ideas, but of stories. The

entire book is one big story, and those sections which are not (such as the legal prescriptions of the Old Testament) are there to provide essential background information so that we may more readily appreciate the nature of the stories."

Drane identifies three kinds of stories in the Christian world-view. The first is God's story, also known as natural theology, identified in this article as general history. Natural theology presents God at work behind the scenes. The second kind of story identified by Drane is Bible stories. Bible stories narrate God's love and human response. In Bible stories, God is not just working behind the scenes, but is present and active on stage. The response of individuals may not necessarily equal God's expectations, and/or standards, but enables everyone to see His character and attributes. This too may equally be understood as Revelation or salvation history. Finally, Drane lists "our own personal stories"—sharing of our own experiences of life and God. By stating "our," Drane means believers, in which case, the stories will be about believers and their pilgrimage. This sounds more like church history. The story of those members that constitute the body of Christ. As stated earlier, church historiographer studies the past, with the purpose of understanding the present to project and/or stimulate growth for the future.

The Salvation of humanity as God's project and plan, carried out through chosen individuals who respond to God's call, will serve both as the point of departure and point of reference through out the discussion on reasons and factors contributing to the growth of the Kenya Assemblies of God church. Church growth centers around salvation, the act (story) of God reaching out and bringing back lost humanity into the fold. As individuals respond to God, they in turn create their own stories, which together complement the church story. These individuals are then nurtured in the Word, equipped and commissioned to service (Eph. 4:11). As the cycle continues, the church grows both numerically (quantitatively) and spiritually (qualitatively), gaining ground in history and participating in the great commission.

The starting point in church growth is Salvation. It then becomes the means to an end, a glorious end, "... to present to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle" and to dwell with mankind forever in the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:1-3). Salvation of humanity

is brought about through the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God. The news is that humanity can once again, not only relate with God, but, that through salvation, there is hope for living eternally with him after this life. God is therefore fully involved with church growth, for He is the author of Salvation.

There is a relation between numerical church growth and the message of the kingdom. Newbiggin (1972:139) rightly postulates that there can surely be no doubt that anyone who is committed to a cause will rejoice when the number of those so committed multiplies. The story of the first days of the church causes a lively interest in numerical growth. However, the rest of the New Testament categorically delight in the marvellous multiplication of the seed. In as much as numerical growth is encouraged and applauded, it is not the measure of the growth and success of the church. Two main areas that contributed to the growth of Kenya Assemblies of God Church are the content, in other words the message, messengers and methods, and the context, in other words the theological and historical factors.

8. DEFINING FACTORS IN GROWTH

8.1 *Spiritual and Theological Factors (Content)*

The Assemblies of God missionaries arrived in Kenya at a particular time in its spiritual history. It is important to consider the spiritual status and mood of the church during that period and the extent to which it influenced the planting of the church and its growth thereafter. Two factors present a framework for discussion. The first is the much applauded East Africa Revival Movement, which preceded the coming of the Assemblies of God missionaries. The second factor is the spiritual state of the majority of historical churches at the time of the revival movements. Most of these churches, also known as the mainline denominations, were not well-prepared to respond to this great spiritual awakening.

There were notable spiritual awakenings in East Africa from the late 40's up until the mid 70's. Smoker argues that Church life and growth in East Africa, has been considerably influenced by what is known as the East Africa Revival Movement. She proceeds to state that it is safe to say that no church body in East Africa has been wholly unaffected by it (Barret, 1971:96). These Revival movements

preceded the coming of the AG missionaries to Kenya. It may well be said that these revival movements paved the way for or fore-a the mission and ministry of the AG missionaries, just like John the Baptist did for the ministry of Jesus. By the early 1970's, the revival movements had mushroomed throughout East Africa. Both the church and unchurched people experienced the effects of the revival. Lay Christians took the initiative to promote and sustain the revival movements and won many converts in the process. Bible studies and prayer meetings characterised Christian fellowships everywhere.

Most of the denominations and mainline (historical) churches were unprepared to respond to this great revival movement. The Majority of the people who were converted as a result of the revival, realised that they no longer belonged with their churches. While some were unable to accommodate their new found faith within their church tradition, for others, it is the church that was unwilling to accommodate them with their new Christian perspective. A large majority of these new believers opted to leave their churches and were out on the look for new "homes" (cf. Barrett, 1968:11ff).

Mlahagwa (Spear and Kimambo, 1999:299) rightly contend that "this progress was also a potential source of schism". He proceeds to state that:

The problem surfaced when leaders of the mainline churches urged the rank and file of the saved to adhere to the rules and traditions of their own denominations. Most mainline churches were still solidly anchored in the traditional missionary doctrines, which did not subscribe to a belief or promotion of the manifestations of the most visible gifts of the spirit, such as speaking in tongues, prophetic utterances and healing. Frustrated by such rigidity and increasing control of the revival movement by conservative clergy a number of born-again believers left their denominational churches to join new Pentecostal churches that were rapidly springing up, while others followed the Kenyan example of establishing their own churches.

He then concludes that "the establishment or consolidation of the charismatic churches thus coincided with and was given momentum by the overall revival movement". The Pentecostal churches drew members from the converts of these great revival movements, including the Kenya Assemblies of God church. These Christians came to the Lord as a result of the preaching of lay believers and

passed down the same tradition. The members of the Kenya Assemblies of God, just like the members of other charismatic churches, took it upon themselves to work evangelise the masses. During the late 70's up to the early 80's, the country was infiltrated by street preaching and open air and marketplace meetings by lay Christians who maintained the practice of preaching the gospel and winning converts.

The message, the messenger and the methods remains at the core of church growth. The methods include those employed by God to perform His will and those used by the messengers in executing their duty. The Holy Spirit is the overall director in the whole formula. He relates and interprets the message to the messenger, makes it relevant and applicable to the recipients, convicts them of sin and leads them to salvation. The means and methods of evangelism, discipleship and church growth are applied through the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

Even though Bible study and prayer meetings in Christian homes and church fellowships characterised the period after the great revival movements, these functions by themselves were not sufficient for the grounding of new believers and the nurturing the saints. This is where the church policy and superior methods of the Assemblies of God church became necessary. The Assemblies of God church is applauded for its superior methods of sound Bible teaching and discipleship among the Pentecostal churches (The Heart of Africa, 2001:9). Kenya Assemblies of God, being a project of the Assemblies of God, was established and grounded in the tradition of sound biblical teaching for all age groups. Sunday school is something that most mainline churches prescribed only for children. Most of these churches held Sunday school just before the main service to get rid of the children while adults worshipped. In the KAG church, Sunday school lessons were provided to Worshipers of all age groups.

This practice, that was considered a new phenomenal among the believers, served to ground new believers in the faith. The grounding that took place during the Sunday school sessions, complemented by mid week Bible studies and prayer meetings and numerous other Bible teaching sessions, provided the much needed ingredient for spiritual growth within the local church. Study guides and other

related materials were supplied by the sending church through the missionaries. About ten years into the beginning of the church, a theological school was constructed for ministerial training. Further teaching continued through correspondence and extension schools.

In his book, *Christianity in Africa*, Kwame Bediako tackles the subject of the nature of African Christianity. This topic is one of the mind puzzling aspects of African Christianity. Even though Bediako's context is West Africa, the facts raised are true of the religious world-view in most of Africa. In discussing the introduction of God to the African continent, he rightly states that "The God of Africans has turned out, after all, to be the God of Israel whom the Christians worship" (1995:213). One ought to understand the continent's primal religious background to appreciate the statement above. There is, however, the danger of going to the extreme of mingling "the old wine with the new wine," thereby distorting the new. This practice leads to syncretism, which cripples the faith.

Bediako's discussion clearly presents his position on the influence and the effects of primal religions in the presence of Christianity in Africa. It is a broad subject that has been ably addressed by both African theologians as well as missionaries (cf. Kato, 1975; Mbiti, Adeyemo, Cragg, 1968, Walls, 1989). It is not the burden of this article to analyse African Traditional Religion(s) critically in relation to Christianity. However, the influence, both negative and/or positive, that these religious beliefs and practices have had on Christianity deserves mention.

As shown above, the same factor that led to the weakening of mainline churches, brought about success in the Pentecostal movement. Syncretism was and continues to be a major factor in African Christianity. Until the period of the great awakenings, the Christian faith was just an addition to the beliefs found in African Traditional Religion. For most people, their was an inner conflict that brought frustration and fatigue. There remained a yearning for something more real and absolute. Besides, given the fact that the newly found independence was calling for national unity and modernity, while urbanization was bringing different people with different beliefs and practices together, the need for a unified spiritual point of reference was necessary.

The practice of African religious beliefs and worship was never uniform among all the different tribes and ethnic groups. Much as the principles behind the ATR were similar, the applications and practices varied from one tribe to another or between the different ethnic groups. Christianity brought about a unified belief and application of faith. Even more importantly, Pentecostalism seemed most relevant to the African way in its expression of faith and worship. Pentecostalism not only addressed the deep-rooted needs of the African individual, but also provided an alternative way of worship that was truly African.

Whereas an attempt to worship the new God in the old ways seemed ineffective, embracing the new faith and seeking to understand it revealed the significant similarities in the Jewish culture and African culture. Originally, the misunderstanding was more on who the Supreme Being was. The Christian teachings helped clear the confusion that existed by pointing the way to the true God by teaching believers to commune with Him. Adding Christianity to the existing maze did not so much resolve the problem as correcting the maze through Biblical teachings did. It has been said, and rightly so, that the missionaries did not bring God to Africa, He was already present in the continent. The need was for someone to point out through the Scripture, the true Worship.

The Assemblies of God missionaries were effective in Bible preaching and teaching, disapproving syncretism and recommending a complete faith in the true God. Their superior method of teaching the whole counsel of God was a major reason for qualitative growth in the church, which in turn sparked quantitative growth. The frustrated masses suddenly realized that it was possible to completely believe, rely on and communicate with God without having mediums and spirits or ancestors to do it. Worship and allegiance was directed to God, where it belongs, and not to some medium who continually haunted the worshipers, always demanding more. This break from the spirits, the mediums and the many "gods" was a big relief for many who had earlier tried to defy these spiritual beings based on their Christian faith unsuccessfully. The power of gospel as preached marked the difference.

8.2 *Historical Factors (Context)*

God uses natural historical events and circumstances to perfect His Will in the lives of individuals, communities, nations and even the world at large. Within the hearts and minds of individuals, in societies or nations, the Holy spirit may create yearnings, an attitude of hope, a mood of anticipation, a readiness for change, even a demand for change so intense that either a drastic reformation of society will come about or a revolution will break up the existing structure (cf. Peters, 1981:69).

The experience in itself cannot cause the change or bring about conversion. However, it serves to prepare the soil, by making it fertile for sowing (Isa. 55:11; Ps. 126:5-6; Eccl. 11:6). The events of the 1998 terrorist attacks directed at the U.S. Embassy in Kenya pose an ideal example to this fact. At this dark hour in the life of the nation, both the leadership and the masses, churches and other societal organizations joined together in unison to call upon God in prayer and to reconsider their position in tolerating other religions like Islam and its claim of "holy war". The natural response was prayer to God. The majority of persons who responded in help and spiritual counselling were members of clergy or licensed counsellors, amongst who Christians were a majority. The situation caused people to soften their hearts and be more receptive to God's Word.

The general history of Kenya reveals that there has been stability and progress in the political scene during the years following independence (cf. Juma, 2002:39-49). This kind of stability and progress enabled other institutions and organizations to function with some predictability. The years that the Assemblies of God missionaries pioneered work in Kenya were characterised by a call for unity and nation building. Every initiative towards progress was encouraged. The 1963 statistics place Christianity at 80% in Kenya (Shaw, 1996:306). Most, if not all political leaders, had attended Christian schools and some proceeded for further education to the west where Christian influence remained strong (*Ibid.*, 237). Missionaries had pioneered developmental work in the country, like the building and maintenance of schools, hospitals and other self-help projects to improve the quality of life. Cooperation between the state and church (mission) was a further impetus in the growth of the

church. Christianity in Kenya was not only encouraged, but given a privileged position to address those matters in society that politics or other authoritative structures tended to refrain from.

Just like the infrastructure of Rome enhanced the spread of the gospel through Paul's missionary journeys, the mushrooming promising infrastructure in post independent Kenya enhanced the efforts of the modern missionary movements. The improvements that took place in the communication and transportation sectors proved to be a major factor in motivating and enhancing evangelisation. The first twenty years following independence saw economic growth and stability within the country. Infrastructure provided the nation with an environment conducive to progress. Many missionary and para-church organizations served the continent from their regional offices in Nairobi, the Capital city. Good relations with the international community and encouragement free trade with the Western world ensured security for the missionary organisations, expatriates from European and American countries and other NGO's working in the country. These factors coupled with the influence that exposure to Western education and ideals brought are among the external factors that contributed to the growth of KAG.

In the traditional African world-view, sacred and secular were intertwined. The two were not distinct, they remained woven into the social and cultural life of the community, both public as well as private. Colonization in Africa led to rapid social change. The deep-rooted cultural and religious beliefs constantly faced challenges in the wake of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernity (cf. Juma, 2002:57). Soon after independence, the fabric of ethnic cultures was disintegrating, leaving an urgent need for an alternative. With all the ethnic groups, refugees, expatriates and immigrants, co-existing and having to form communities, most people found a unifying factor in either the educational context, professional associations and/or religious affiliation. With individuals separated from their primary associations (extended family, clans, communities or tribes) the old bonds did not hold strong enough when overstretched.

Christianity grew stronger in the light of this social and cultural disintegration as it had something tangible to offer – a community united under one faith. Where ethnic affiliation, political affiliation or even elite movement proved inadequate to offer strong chords that

could bind different groups of people together, the church provided a solution – the bond of faith – which gave her an upper hand. As such, many people turned to the church not only to embrace its beliefs and teachings, but also to adopt a new community which would meet the needs left hanging by the broken down social and cultural systems.

This phenomenon echoes what Poloma observed in her analysis of growth in Charismatic Renewal. Her analysis was in a different context, but her study directly applies to this situation due to the fact that she was looking at the impact of charismatic movements in church growth from a church historical perspective. In her opening paragraph she rightly postulates that:

A significant by-product of the second wave of the charismatic movement that gained momentum in the 1960s is the rise of Christian intentional communities. In an increasingly individualistic society where often even family ties are transient, neighbourhood seemingly anachronistic, and long-term an increasing rarity, many began a quest for community. This search for community was evident in the short-lived era of communes in the 1960s and early 1970 – a search that gave rise to communal living among members of new religious movements ... as well as among some followers of the charismatic movement. The desire for a new depth of fellowship among believers baptized in the Holy Spirit should surprise no one; nor should the problems in living out new levels of commitment. The first fires of Pentecost gave rise to a community that is described in Acts 2:44-47 (Elbert, 1988:237ff).

The African culture is closer to the "Bible (Hebrew) culture" than it is to Western cultures. The aspect of community living as prescribed in the Bible and highly encouraged by charismatic movement, portrays the African way of life and community living. It is expected that community living is something that would come more naturally to an African. Individuals find it easy to blend into a community and grow with it with ease. Africans embraced and cherished community living, a tradition which industrialization threatened to destroy to its roots. As such, Pentecostal churches' provision of intact community living was a welcomed ideal.

Smoker observed seven small group meetings that arose from the charismatic renewal movement to see a pattern in their decision making process. Her study noted a pattern that revealed unanimity and group consensus in making decisions. In her conclusion she

makes reference to the similarity between African and New Testament Christian communality, when she notes that:

Decision-making in some East Africa Revival group meetings is carried on with a minimum of difficulty because it is in a context of unusual interpersonal relationships. There is something authentically African, perhaps, in the assumption that the whole group is naturally involved in each member's problems. There is also an element of communality which is authentically Christian in the New Testament sense ... It may be that something which has been lost from Western Christianity has been initiated, re-introduced and is once again being demonstrated in this part of Africa, making it worth while for all of us to listen to these our brethren (Barret, 1971:96-108).

Research has been done in the area of African Initiatives in church renewal, African Independent church movements and other African Church History topics. The findings seem to point to the fact that charismatic movements, renewal initiatives and newer independent movements tend to appeal more to the African expression and celebration of religion and faith, than the older mainline denominations.

9. *PENTECOSTALISM: MODERN MISSIONARY PARADIGM IN AFRICA*

The Pentecostal movement is a phenomenon that occurred within the Modern Missionary paradigm in the early twentieth century. Nelson rightly postulates that "The Pentecostal-Charismatic Renewal Movement has emerged within our own 20th century as a surprising if not amazing global phenomenon, rivalling or surpassing in scope, intensity, and sheer numbers the many earlier great renewal movements of Christian history" (Elbert, 1988:172). Nelson acknowledges that two visionary American clergymen share the primary responsibility for launching and shaping this renewal. They are Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929) and William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922) (cf. Blumhofer, 1989).

The early missionaries to Africa did a profound job laying the foundation for modern Christianity in Africa. They must be commended for the courage with which they responded to their inner conviction to take the gospel to the continent of Africa. Any attempt to analyse their success in evangelising the continent and criticize their short comings, has to take into account the challenges that they

faced, the opposition from ethnic leaders or Islamic militants and dealing with tropical diseases. They had difficulty in struggling with the issues of communicating the gospel within the context of the African religious beliefs and philosophies, the primal religions and paganism, and confronting illiteracy.

In light of the challenges faced and circumstances with which they had to serve, and the fact that the seed of the gospel survived, their efforts deserve merit. However, that does not negate the need to critically evaluate their work, taking note of their shortcomings and the possible stumbling blocks they erected in the progress of their work. Spears outlines issues like "disregarding the African beliefs and practices as evil, working closely with the colonial government and rejecting the emergence of local initiative and leadership" (1999:3-24), that later led to either misconception or total rejection of Christianity.

Barrett has done an extensive study on Schism and Renewal in Africa, looking at causation, similarities and even possible explanations to the mushrooming Independent churches in Africa, which stem from historical churches. In his preliminary observation, he rightly states that "due to their inadequate understanding of traditional African society, missions had inadvertently attacked certain elements in that society crucial to its existence, but concerning which biblical faith was silent when this discrepancy between the missionary and the biblical positions was realized, the reaction begun" (1986:7).

Barrett further notes that the pioneer missionaries were more sympathetic to the African culture and tradition, but that the evolutionary climate of opinion in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century saw African religion ... "as on the point of dissolution in favour of the Christian religion. The large influx of white missionaries after the Berlin Conference of 1885 introduced a type of missionaries less scholarly than the pioneers; and their unsympathetic attitude to African society may be explained by the paucity of ethnographic literature on Africa at that period ... "(*Ibid.*, 88). He qualifies his observation above when he states that "probably the major reason for this failure in understanding was that missions were overwhelmed, more perhaps than at any other time or place in history, by the enormous response of Africans to their message."

As stated above, Barrett's study is targeted towards understanding the causation and possible similarities in separatist movements in Africa. One among the variety of causes that he lists is the direct attack and total rejection of the African culture and religious practices. The result was the emergence of numerous African Independent churches, which tended to pattern its worship and expression of faith in a more vibrant manner as opposed to the historical churches. Many of these churches were built on foundations of strifes and quarrels, some extreme cases reveal selfish motives and power struggle on the part of the leader (unwillingness to submit to another person's authority). Much as they can't all be justified, they equally can't all be dismissed. However, that is not within the limits of this paper. One thing that emerges from the study points at an alternative way in which the Pentecostal churches provided for the disillusioned Africans who neither desired to separate nor join one of the independent churches.

The modern missionaries had the advantage of learning from their predecessors and, where applicable, reviewing their message and methods as they built upon the foundation that had already been laid. Pentecostalism, for instance, challenged people to a life saving faith in Jesus as opposed to a head knowledge faith in religion. They stressed relationship with Jesus and spiritual growth as opposed to religious exercises and observance of rituals. The missionaries addressed the issue of syncreticism and offered an alternative in the power of the gospel. They encouraged worship that was compatible with the African expression and celebration of faith—Holy Spirit and prophecy. They further challenged the nominalism of mainline churches and called people to repentance. Their message and approach was more compatible with the African quest for spirituality. "The unique manifestations of Pentecostalism found ready acceptance in Africa. The spontaneity of worship and freedom of expression which characterized the Pentecostal movement matched with the makeup of many African societies" (cf. heart of Africa; 2001:9).

In *The History of African Christianity*, Thomas Spears extends his study beyond the causes to look at some consequences in the struggle for control of the church between the missionaries and African leadership among them, the rise of Charismatic prophecy

and healing. He argues that "African prophets seized by the Holy Spirit, acquired charismatic gifts and established their own prayer groups and spirit movements. Such prophets built on the traditions of the Old Testament and Christ's ministry as much as on African prophetic traditions and quests for spiritual power to contest the European monopoly on God's word". Spears rightly concludes that "African prophecy was nothing new but the message was, nor the communities that the prophets established new" (1999:8).

Spears' observation is in agreement with Poloma's (Elbert, 1988:237ff). They both underline the fact that Pentecostalism provided a long desired alternative in (African) Christianity, a factor that partially accounts for the sizeable amount of people that left the mainline churches for Pentecostal churches. In the fifth and sixth chapters of his book, Drane (2000) echoes the same idea when he proposes that Western churches should seek to recover more open-ended ways of celebrating the faith, make allowance for relevance in worship, reconsider the use of liturgy and exercise the prophetic gifts more to curb decline in churches.

Modernity in the context of the African Church, states Samuel, "came in the package of colonial expansion mainly in the 18th and the 19th centuries. Apparently it also took place in the wake of the Great Evangelical Awakening and the Industrial Revolution in Europe" (Transformation, 1993:16). The Early missionaries introduced literacy with a goal of spreading Bible knowledge, however, modernity enabled their efforts to accomplish and supersede their goals. Modernity may be considered the vehicle that accelerated the spread of Christian ideals and programs. Samuel further contend that "the culture of modernity was spread throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by industry, science, education, health care and all the mod cons of modern life. The Christian life benefited from this culture and helped spread it. Education and health care especially became entry points for Christian mission" (Transformation, 1993:1).

The modern missionary movements had the advantage of building upon the foundations laid by their early counterparts. Literacy had spread substantially, making it possible to distribute Bibles and Scripture literature, thereby reaching more people and empowering them with the Christian knowledge. This situation enhanced the

uniqueness of the Assemblies of God church in emphasizing Bible literacy. The question that comes to the fore is: How did this young church managed to attract big crowds and win so many converts within a short period of time? In light of the fact that there were other Pentecostal churches present and active in the country at that time, including Pentecostal Assemblies of God – whose sending mission is the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, The Elim Mission, The Holiness Church, The Apostolic Faith Mission, and Independent Pentecostal movements like, The Deliverance Church and Redeemed Gospel Church among others. In looking at the figures at the end of the third decade, it is observed that KAG was leading not only in numbers, but also in evangelism and discipleship, educational programs and the number of churches in urban areas.

The key to answering the question of fast growth lies in the focus that the Assemblies of God church maintained from its inception in America, which has filtered down to its daughter churches internationally. Georgianna, who addresses this issue, posits that: "By focusing on the spiritual needs of people, the Assemblies of God was successful in maintaining the purity of its beliefs over the years and the dedication of its pastors and lay people (Elbert (ed.) 1988:269). Focusing on spiritual needs also is undoubtedly the key to the phenomenal growth of the Assemblies of God and its international missionary enterprises". Teaching the whole counsel of God was of paramount importance to the Assemblies of God missionaries, who imparted their vision to local pastors. The foundation was laid in teaching the Word of God (cf. Cloud, 1997).

In its origin, observes Georgianna, the Assemblies of God was not interested so much in having a great social impact in the world other than what might be accomplished through evangelism and the baptism in the Holy spirit. Seeing that many other churches had laid emphasis on social actions directed toward changing society to the exclusion of evangelism and spiritual growth, engaging in humanitarian and help activities, the Assemblies of God took the other extreme, to their advantage, of emphasizing evangelism and spiritual growth. While others were concerned with clothing, healing and feeding the body to reach the soul, the Assemblies of God concentrated in reaching and feeding the soul.

Spiritual growth was brought about by teaching the new converts and equipping them for the works of the ministry. These teachings were administered to all believers of all ages, every individual in the church was catered for. The whole congregation was divided into groups ranging from age to needs. In Sunday school every individual of every age received quality, life applicable, Bible teaching. There were several services during the week aimed at teaching and expounding the Scriptures and prayer meetings. In addition to these services, there remained house fellowships where small groups gathered and discussed Bible issues and topics. Once grounded in the word, the believers were encouraged to participate in the ministry of evangelism and discipleship which further enhanced their growth. Thus the Priesthood of all believers was effectively applied within the congregations.

Again, a major part of this tradition is credited to the uprising of the East Africa Revival movement. Smoker conducted a study among the revival movement groups. She found that there were quite a few areas in East Africa where there were small groups of Brethren, as they call themselves, meeting regularly to praise God, to pray and to share together what they feel God is doing for them or has freshly shown them in the Bible (Barret, 1971:96ff). The Assemblies of God introduced Bible teachings in small group meetings, which provided a lacking ingredient for some of these revival movement meetings. Some of the meetings needed authority figures of trained members able to expound the Scriptures and apply the lessons to life issues. Members of these groups who attended Assemblies of God churches, emerged as natural leaders responding to the needs. This became possible due to the empowerment that took place in the Assemblies of God Churches. In most cases, some of the members of the revival group movements, who "hungered and thirst for more" joined their "leader" or counterpart to the Assemblies of God church. Thus, sparking numerical growth in the churches.

These individuals became effective "fishers of men." In most cases, it was the believers who won converts to the church and brought them in for discipleship, even as they went back for more. These new converts were soon equipped and released to the world as witnesses. The Theological school was a major source of growth and impact. It brought about growth within the Kenya Assemblies of God Church,

but also to other churches of the same and different teachings through acceptance of students from all churches that professed Christ. At the time, the independent Pentecostal churches did not have a ministerial training school. Most of their ministers were trained in the Assemblies of God school of ministry. By so doing, the Assemblies of God impacted many more churches in Kenya than have been documented.

Drane's study on the current state of the church in the Western world is interesting to note. He presents the picture of the church in chapters 1-4 of his book. The situation indicates a decline in not only church attendance, but also a disinterest in Christianity. A major cause of this decline, as he has observed, is the irrelevance of churches all over the West. He has discussed other possible causes, noting that the list cannot be exhaustive. Given the fact that all churches (even from the same denominations or locations) are not necessarily uniform, the needs and challenges that they may face or that affect their mission may not be exactly the same. However, Drane's focus was to create awareness of the changing current paradigms of the present age. By using biblical and theological insight, he wanted to identify constructive ways forward for the future church.

Having presented the current situation of the church, Drane in chapters 5-7 explores some creative ways in which the church's message, programs, worship service and celebration of faith can be more relevant in addressing the needs of its generation. It is interesting to note that some of the recommendations that Drane outlines as necessary to bring back life and generate growth in the churches reflect the Pentecostal way of church life. Apparently, alternative church music, movement, dance in worship and prophetic gifts, components highlighted by Drane, accompany African religious expression. Thus the emphasis laid on teaching God's Word to encourage spiritual growth by the Assemblies of God coupled with the Pentecostal approach to church life and worship, provided the most needed ingredient for growth and expansion of the church.

10. CONCLUSION

The scene is changing, the forces of modernity are enfolding into a new paradigm commonly known as post modernity. Post modern

world-views emerged gradually in developed countries, but not so for many African countries, Kenya included. Post-modern paradigm is the natural product of the modern paradigm. Since modernity has found home on the African soil, the by-product, post modernity, is bound to emerge. Analysing the situation a decade ago, Finger rightly pointed out that "despite their bright promise, and despite their various positive results, the forces of modernity have now produced, throughout the world, much scepticism, fragmentation, determinism, domination, relativism and conflict. All this has led to a condition which many call post modernity" (Transformation, 1993:23).

Modernity enhanced the efforts of the modern missionary enterprises in Africa, leading to massive growth of the church. Post modernity on the other hand, threatens the very existence of that church. Sadly, the church in Africa does not have the option of choosing whether to flow with the post-modern current or to remain static. Change has never offered such a choice. Like a wind, change moves with everything that happens to be in its way. "There will be no going back, states Kung (1995:774) to a uniform interpretation of the world. Precisely within a paradigm which is really post modern, there will inevitably be a multiplicity of heterogeneous schemes of life, patterns of action, ... social models and faith communities." The church in Africa has found itself with the helpless feeling that can appropriately be described by the words of the psalmist in Psalm 11:3 "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" while the communities now echo the words of the African writer; Chinua Achebe: "the centre no longer hold and things fall apart."

The previous generation of church leaders responded to the rationalistic, atheistic challenge of the claim that there is no God. However, for post moderns the question is not "is there God?" but "which God?" This shift in world views and patterns of thought is affecting all communities and churches. The KAG church is not exempted, since it draws its members from the very same population. Besides, the emerging face of the future church in Africa is already forming. Most of the potential future "leaders of the church in Africa" are growing and training together either in schools and colleges or at the evangelical graduate theological schools, two of which are housed in Nairobi, Kenya. The Pentecostal experience has found its way right into many of the mainline churches. In the

meantime, due to some leadership policies that discourage initiative in advance theological training and ministry outside the mainstream, the KAG is losing quite a few of quality ministers. There is need for reflection and critical evaluation of the KAG church with a goal of assessing the changing needs and times of her constituents and mission field, seeking to address those needs while keeping step with the times. The advantage that the churches in Africa have, is the availability of literature on the post-modern paradigm. The wise advised that "to be fore-warned is to be fore-armed".

REFERENCES

- Adeyemo, T. (ed.) 1993. *A Christian Mind in a Changing Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya : The Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM).
- Agbeti, J.K. 1986. *West African Church History* E.J. Brill, Leiden : The Netherlands.
- Anderson, L. 1990. *Dying for Change. An Arresting Look at the New Realities Confronting Churches and Para-Church Ministries*. Minneapolis : Bethany House Publishers.
- Anderson, W.B. 1977. *The Church in East Africa 1840-1976*. Uzima Press : Nairobi.
- Barret, D.B. (ed.). 1971. *African Initiatives in Religion*. East African Publishing House, Nairobi : Kenya.
- Barret, D.B. (ed.). 1968. *Schism and Renewal in Africa*. Oxford University Press, Nairobi : Kenya.
- Bediako, Kwame 1995. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh University Press : Edinburgh.
- Bosch, D J. 1991. *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York : Mary Knoll.
- Brumback, C. 1977. *Like A River: The Early Years of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, Missouri : Gospel Publishing House.
- Clark, M.S. & Lederle, H.I. et al. 1983. *What is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* Pretoria : University of South Africa.
- Cloud, David W. (Ed.) 1997. *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*. Oak Harbor : Washington.
- Dockery, D.S. (Ed.) 1995. *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*. Victor Books : Wheaton, IL.
- Dockery, D.S. (Ed.) 2001. *The Challenge of Post Modernism (second edition)*. A Bridge Point Books. Grand Rapids : MI.
- Drane, J. 2000. *The McDonalidization of the Church*. Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd : London.
- Elbert, P. (ed.) 1988. *Faces of Renewal*. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody : Massachusetts.
- Finger, T. 1993. *Modernity, Post-modernity - What in the World are They?* In "Transformation," Vol. 10, No. 4 Oct/Dec, pp. 20-26.

- George, C.F. & Bird, W. 1994. *The Coming Church Revolution: Empowering Leaders for the Future*. Fleming H. Revell. Grand Rapids : Michigan.
- Gertzel, C. 1970. *The Politics of Independent Kenya*. East Africa Publishing House : Nairobi.
- Githige, R.M. 1982. The Mission State Relationship in Colonial Kenya: A Summary. *Journal of Religion in Africa*. XIII (2):110-125
- Guinness, O. 1993. Mission Modernity - Seven Checkpoints on Mission in the Modern World. In "Transformation", Vol. 10, No. 4 Oct/Dec, pp. 3-13
- Haas Jr., J.W. 1994. John Wesley's Views on Science and Christianity: An Examination of the Charge of Antiscience. In "American Society of Church History," September, vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 378-392.
- Hollenweger, W.J. 1973 *The Pentecostals*. Augsburg Publishing House : Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Hollenweger, W.J. 1996. From Azusa Street to the Toronto Phenomenon: Historical Roots of the Pentecostal Movement. (In Mootman, J. & Kuschel, K. *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*.) Orbis Books : Maryknoll, NY.
- Hummel, C.E. 1993. *Fire in the Fire Place: Charismatic Renewal in the Nineties*. InterVarsity Press : Downers Grove, IL.
- Hunter III, G.G. 1996. *Church for the Unchurched*. Abingdon Press, Nashville.
- Kalu, O.U. "African Church Historiography." (In Falola, T. 1993. *African Historiography: Essays in honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi*.) Nigeria : Longman Nigeria Plc. pp. 166-179.
- Kaplan, I. Dobert, M.K., Marvin, B.J., McLaughlin, J.L. & Whitaker, D.P. 1975. *Area Handbook for Kenya*. American University : Washington D.C.
- KENYA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD FINANCIAL REPORT, 1999-2000
- Klaas, A.C. 1996. *In Search of the Unchurched*. The Alban Institute : Inc. NY
- Knight III, H.H. 1997. *A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Post-modern World*. Abingdon Press : Nashville, TN.
- Knox, C. 1993. *Changing Christian Paradigms and Their Implications for Modern Thought*. New York : EJ Brill.
- Kuhn, T.S. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kuhn, T.S. 1977. *The Essential Tension*. Chicago : The University of Chicago.
- Kung, H. 1995. *Christianity: Its Essence and History*. Kent : SCM Press Ltd.
- Lategan, B.C. 1988. Why a Few Converts to New Paradigms in Theology? (In Mouton, J; Van Aarde A.G.; Vorster W.S. *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*. Pretoria : HSRC).
- London, N. 2002. *Ideology and Politics in English Language Education in Trinidad and Tobago: The Colonial Experience and A Postcolonial Critique*. University of Western Ontario : London, ON.
- Marwick, A. 1989. *The Nature of History*. London : The Macmillan Press.
- Marwick, A. 1986. *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*. Nairobi : Oxford University Press.

- McIntire, C.T & Wells, R.A (eds.) 1984. *History and Historical Understanding*. William B. Eedmans Publishing Co. : Grand Rapids.
- McIntire, C.T & Wells, R.A (eds.) 1974. *The Ongoing Task of Christian Historiography*. Institute for Christian Studies Publications : Toronto.
- McNamee, J.J. 1974. *The Role of The Spirit in Pentecostalism: A Comparative Study*. Doctoral Dissertation, Universitat Tübingen.
- Newbiggin, Lesslie 1978 *The Open Secret*. William B. Eerdman's Publishing Co. Grand Rapids : MI.
- Njiri, P.W. 1998. General Superintendent, KAG; Interview.
- Odendaal, B.J. (1982). *African Church Historiography: An Evaluation, Motivation and Exploration of an Overdue Exercise*. University of Zululand : South Africa.
- Peters, George W. 1981. *A Theology of Church Growth*. Zondervan Publishing House. Grand Rapids : Michigan.
- Rake, A. 1998. (In *EUROPA: Africa South of the Sahara*.) Europa Publications Limited : London.
- Saayman, W. 1993. Some Reflections on the Development of the Pentecostal Mission Model in South Africa. In *Missionalia* 21(1):40-56.
- Samuel, V. 1993. Modernity, Post modernity and Ethnic Minorities. In *Transformation* vol. 10, No. 4; October/December. Myerstown, PA. U.S.A.
- Spear, T. & Kimambo, I.N. (eds.) 1999. *East African Expressions of Christianity*. James Currey Ltd : Oxford.
- The Heart of Africa. 2001. <http://www.heartofafrica.org/strategy.html>
- Throup, D.W. & Hornsby, C. 1998. *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya*, Nairobi : Kenya.
- Tosh, J. 1991. *The Pursuit of History*. Longman Group Limited, Edinburgh Gate : Harlow.
- Towns, E.L. 1990. *10 of Today's Most Innovative Churches*. Regal Books.
- Vorster, J.M. 1994. "Die Kerk in 'n Nuwe Konteks" In *die Skriflig* (English translation) 28(3):309-329.
- Vorster, W.S. 1988. Towards a Post-Critical Paradigm. Progress in New Testament Scholarship. (In Mouton, J. ed. *Paradigm and Progress in Theology*. Pretoria : HSRC).